



## **SPECIAL REPORT:** OOIDA supports Baird's bill on loans for truckers

**Thursday, Sept. 18, 2008** – U.S. Rep. Brian Baird, D-WA, introduced a bill yesterday that would allow small-business truckers to apply for low-interest loans to keep their businesses afloat in the wake of record high fuel prices that have squeezed truckers' bottom lines in recent months.

Baird sits on the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which is a key committee for truckers' concerns.

According to Baird's legislation, HR6922, transportation businesses that have "suffered, or that are likely to suffer, from high fuel prices, would be able to apply for the emergency loans through the Small Business Administration."

"Truckers provide the backbone of our nation's retail economy, and an alarming number of trucking and transportation businesses are going belly up, unable to afford the rising cost of fuel," Baird stated in a news release.

"Even more disturbing, some are being forced to choose between paying for safety repairs and filling up the (fuel) tank. This legislation would provide them with a stopgap measure to help keep them and our economy afloat."

The loans would be capped at \$250,000 and would be offered under "terms similar to those offered through the SBA's 'essential employee' program, which allows small businesses to seek disaster assistance if one of their employees is a military reservist who gets called up to active duty," according to the legislation.

Baird has also "reached out" to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-CA, and has asked that his legislation be included in the upcoming economic stimulus package. Four U.S. representatives have signed on as co-sponsors of the bill, including Norman Dicks, D-WA; Peter DeFazio, D-OR; John Salazar, D-CO; and Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, D-SD.

"The economic changes we've experienced over the past few months have been nothing short of disastrous," Baird stated. "As Congress readies a second stimulus package, this bill needs to be part of it."

Rod Nofziger, director of government affairs for the Missouri-based Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, said Baird's bill might not have come to fruition

without the persistence and determination of OOIDA member Sherrie Bond of Chehalis, WA. She met with Baird in May and then again in August as part of a community forum to discuss the hardships truckers are experiencing.

“When I met with Rep. Baird and his staff recently in DC, the first thing they referred to was a letter from Sherrie Bond asking for help on behalf of all truckers struggling to cope with high diesel prices,” Nofziger told *Land Line* on Thursday, Sept. 18. “She stepped up and got the ball rolling. Rep. Baird ran with the information and put together this bill aimed at helping small-business truckers.”

Bond said she was “thrilled” when she received a copy of the bill on Wednesday, Sept. 17, and said she hopes all truckers will call their elected officials to support Baird’s legislation. Click [here](#) to read the text of Baird’s bill.

“I have such respect for truckers who are out there risking their lives to deliver the goods we need and it’s hard to see them hurting and struggling to survive. They just needed someone to advocate for them and encourage them to keep going,” Bond said. “I guess that’s what my role in life is – to be an advocate for truckers.”

Bond first met with Baird in May at a Memorial Day service to honor veterans in Olympia, WA. The day before he was scheduled to attend the event, Bond said she called Kelly Love, Baird’s district director in Vancouver, WA. Bond asked if there was any way he could spare 10 minutes to speak with her about what was happening to truckers as the result of high fuel prices.

“He spent over an hour and a half with us as we spoke from our hearts about what was happening to us as we watched our friends lose their businesses and homes and their families because of fuel prices while the oil industry justifies their obscene profits,” she said. “He was true to his word and ran with the information we provided him with.”

When diesel fuel spiked to \$5 per gallon in some areas this summer, it forced some truckers to park their trucks or declare bankruptcy and get out of the business. According to Baird, those record-high fuel prices prompted bankruptcies that have taken an estimated “90,000 trucks off the road,” which he said accounts for almost “5 percent of our nation’s trucking capacity.”

“We cannot just sit idly by while a significant part of our nation’s economy disappears,” Baird said in his release. “The federal government has devoted a lot of energy to backing up Wall Street in the past few days. We need to focus our attention on Main Street as well. This bill does that.”

OOIDA is asking truckers and their friends and families to call the offices of both their U.S. senators and their U.S. representative to ask them to support HR6922.

“Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and provide the operator with your home ZIP code,” Nofziger said. “The operator will connect you with the offices of your elected representatives.”